

Sunbeams (Grades Pre-K-Kindergarten, Ages 3-5)

- Things to say:
 - Generally children grow up assuming that their parents will always be there to protect them and keep them safe, healthy, and emotionally secure. When that protective shell is suddenly broken the children worry about the strength and reliability of what is left. Children's concerns over the loss in their life create many additional fears in their lives. These children need to understand that keeping their fears and worries locked up inside is usually more frightening and damaging than when they are shared out in the open.
 - It is okay to have fears and worries, especially when things are changing at home. You don't have to pretend that everything is fine. When you are afraid, you can share that feeling with someone you love. You can tell him or her what you are feeling in here (point to heart). And then you will feel better all over!
- Activities:
 - Read a book about monsters or scary things, such as *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. Please adapt or add to these questions, noting the special worries, fears or loss issues brought by the participants to your group.
 - Give the children paper and crayons and ask them to draw scary pictures.
 - Ask questions like: Do monsters scare you? Are monsters real or pretend? What other kinds of things scare you? Are they real or pretend? What do you do when you are scared? What do you do to feel better? What else might help you to feel better? When you are scared, do you talk to someone special? Who? Does this person help you feel better?

Rainbows Level 1 (Grades 1-2, Ages 6-8)

- Things to say:
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 - Reflect: I get so afraid sometimes. I know that there is someone who understands my fears and will take care of me.
- Activities:
 - Drawing a picture of what makes the children feel afraid will help them gain control over their fear(s)—at least while they are together. Encourage the children to talk to someone they trust about what worries or scares them. An explanation from a person who loves them can be much more comforting than what they sometimes imagine.

- Please adapt or add to these questions, noting the special fears, worries, and loss issues brought by the participants to your group: Everyone has fears and worries from time to time, share one of yours with us. Sometimes our worries and fears are very real. Sometimes our worries and fears feel real, but are unlikely to happen. What do you do when you are worried or afraid? Are there other ways to handle these feelings? Who is the special person you go to when you feel worried or afraid?
- Give each child one lump of clay. Instruct them to mold their clay into what they worry about most. Going around the room, give each child a chance to express:
 - What they made with their clay; why it worries them; how they are feeling about it now; and perhaps talk with the group about ways they can handle that worry.

Rainbows Level 2 (Grades 3-4, Ages 8-10)

- Things to say:
 - Generally children grow up assuming that their parents will always be there to protect them and keep them safe, healthy, and emotionally secure. When that protective shell is suddenly broken the children worry about the strength and reliability of what is left. Children's concerns over the loss in their life create many additional fears in their lives. These children need to understand that keeping their fears and worries locked up inside is usually more frightening and damaging than when they are shared out in the open.
 - Reflect: It is normal to worry about things and to be afraid of the future. I must remember that talking about fears and worries helps to sort them out.
- Activities:
 - First, talk with the children about fear. Let them know that fear is something that we all have, and sometimes it can stay with us and be scary. After giving each child a piece of paper, instruct them to draw their greatest fear in their family. Talk with them about how everyone's fears can be different or the same. While they are drawing, share one of your own fears and how you overcame it. Then, after the children have drawn their fears, have them each talk in front of the group one by one. When it is their turn, have them share their fear with the group, and then have them imagine that they are a superhero. Ask them what they would do to "fix" their fear if they were a superhero. Let each child have a turn. "If you have a child who is very uncomfortable sharing, perhaps ask to assist them, or allow them to just talk to the group about what powers they would want as a superhero." After the activity, discuss the importance of knowing what our fears are, and sharing them with others, in order to help them be less scary.
 - Ask the children to think about some things they are afraid of. Pass out 10-15 squares of paper to each child. Have them write each of their fears on separate squares of construction paper. Next, have a discussion about the difference between "Big Fears" and "Little Fears." Have the children separate their squares

into a column of “Big Fears” and a column of “Little Fears.” Remind children that, no matter whether the fear is big or little, having fears is completely normal. Encourage children to share their fears with the group. Perhaps some children will share the same fears.

- Ask questions like: What helped you distinguish between “Big Fears” and “Little Fears”? What makes a fear “Big” or “Little”? How can they deal with Big Fears? How can they deal with Little Fears? Are Little Fears still important to acknowledge?

Rainbows Level 3 (Grades 5-6, Ages 10-12)

- Things to say:
 - Generally children grow up assuming that their parents will always be there to protect them and keep them safe, healthy, and emotionally secure. When that protective shell is suddenly broken the children worry about the strength and reliability of what is left. Children’s concerns over the loss in their life create many additional fears in their lives. These children need to understand that keeping their fears and worries locked up inside is usually more frightening and damaging than when they are shared out in the open.
 - Reflect: Keeping my fears and worries bottled up inside takes up a lot of energy. Just talking about these feelings makes me feel better. It is good knowing that there are people always there to listen.
- Activities:
 - Children will have the opportunity to identify fears they have experienced and explore which ones are real and which are imagined. You will need to create a Fears Board on a whiteboard or poster board. The Fears Board is divided into five columns labeled Natural Fears, Family Fears, School-Day Fears, Physical Fears and Emotional Fears. On index cards, write examples of these five categories of fears and tape them on the board to create bundles of fears. Examples of different fears: **Natural Fears** (sickness, storms, dark, snakes, loud noises, fire, wind), **Family Fears** (moving, not seeing other parent, being from a single parent family), **School-Day Fears** (failing at school, changing schools, not seeing my friends), **Physical Fears** (water if you can’t swim, bleeding, shots, roller coasters, trains or airplanes, dying, illness, pain), **Emotional Fears** (the unknown, being embarrassed, being unpopular, being alone).
 - Display the Fears Board and read aloud the different categories.
 - Read aloud the bundles of fears placed below each heading. Ask participants to raise their hand if they have experienced a fear you mention.
 - Give the teens blank index cards and encourage them to write their own fears on the cards.

- Give the teens an opportunity to add their fears to the board. Try to focus the discussion mainly on the Family Fears, and ask them what they have done to help themselves overcome those fears.
 - Ask questions like: Everyone has fears and worries from time to time. Share one of yours with us. What do you do when you are worried or afraid? Are there other ways to handle these feelings? Who is a special person you go to when this happens? What do you do when you can't control your fears?
- First, begin the activity with having the group close their eyes. While their eyes are closed, instruct them to imagine that they are looking at their biggest fear. Whatever their biggest fear may be, it is not able to get to them, but they are able to see it. Have them spend time imagining that they are looking at their biggest fear and watching it come to life. Next, have them open their eyes and spend some time discussing how this made everyone feel in the group. Pass out three sticky notes per person and have them write down three of their biggest fears (one on each sticky note). Next, after everyone is finished writing, have them put the sticky notes onto the board or onto the wall to share with the group. As more people come up to share their fears, if they have the same fear as one that is already on the board, have them place it right next to it. After all sticky notes are stuck where the group can see, discuss the fears that occurred most. Finish the activity with some group brainstorming about ways to deal with fears. Perhaps discuss some of your own fears with the group, and reassure them that having fears is completely normal. We all have fears, and sometimes we have fears that are the same as others. Dealing with our fears can be hard, but it always helps to turn to a friend or an adult that we love and trust.

Rainbows Level 4 (Grades 7-8, Ages 12-14)

- Things to say:
 - Generally children grow up assuming that their parents will always be there to protect them and keep them safe, healthy, and emotionally secure. When that protective shell is suddenly broken the children worry about the strength and reliability of what is left. Children's concerns over the loss in their life create many additional fears in their lives. These children need to understand that keeping their fears and worries locked up inside is usually more frightening and damaging than when they are shared out in the open.
 - Reflect: Sharing my fears with those I trust can help me work through them.
- Activities:
 - Give each group member two note cards. Tell them to title one card "Sweet Dreams" and the other "Night Fears." Tell the children that they do not need to write their names on the cards. Next, ask the participants to write a list of some of their "Sweet Dreams" on one card and their "Night Fears" on the other. Explain that the cards will be collected, shuffled, and spread out on the table. After the cards have been spread on the table, you will shine the flashlight on individual

cards and read one “Sweet Dream” or one “Night Fear” aloud. The group may discuss the feelings that could surround these dreams and fears and decide whether the dreams and fears are realistic or unrealistic.

- Please adapt or add to these questions, noting the special fears, worries, and loss issues brought by the participants to your group: What are some of the fears you felt that did not come true? Can you tell us about a time when you were able to cope with or find a solution to something that worried you? How did coping with that fear or worry make you feel? Who can you talk to about the things you fear? How do you think your worries and fears will change as you get older?

Spectrum Level 1 (Grades 9-10, Ages 14-16)

- Things to say:
 - When a young person’s world is shaken by a loss or change, they are increasingly concerned about a lack of stability in their lives. Rather than hiding their fears, adolescents need to understand these fears are a natural outcome of such dramatic change. Only by acknowledging and sharing these feelings can adolescents learn to overcome them.
 - Reflect: Even though I know that my fears and worries are a natural part of life, it is still difficult to talk about them. I am learning to seek comfort and share my feelings with the people I trust.
- Activities:
 - Set up the game Jenga. Every time a member pulls a block out, instruct them to talk about a fear, worry, or other emotion they have had since they lost their loved one. Keep playing until all the blocks fall, then discuss how the loss and following emotions have made the foundation of their lives shaky and unsure of the future. Then, pick up the blocks and divide them evenly between each child in the group. Instruct each child to think about each block as a way they have coped with fears, worries, anxieties, etc. since their loss. Build the Jenga tower back up using these, and then discuss how healthy coping can help us feel more secure for what’s to come in the future, because we have the tools to prepare ourselves.
 - Materials: Clear glass gems (1.25 inches are a good size), circle hole punch (1/4 inch smaller than gems), white and colored paper, cut into circles using hole punch, glue sticks, pens. Instructions: Have members identify a personal fear or worry they experience. Then ask them to think of a positive word or phrase that is the opposite of that fear. For example, if the fear is, “Things will get chaotic in my household,” the touchstone can say, “Breathe.” Have them write the word or phrase on the paper circle. Apply glue to the same side as the writing, and affix paper to glass gem, words facing up. You can also use Modge Podge for this step. Discussion: Encourage members to carry this touchstone around with them and use it to provide grounding when they are feeling worried or stressed.

Spectrum Level 2 (Grades 11-12, Ages 16-18)

- Things to say:
 - When a young person's world is shaken by a loss or change, they are increasingly concerned about a lack of stability in their lives. Rather than hiding their fears, adolescents need to understand these fears are a natural outcome of such dramatic change. Only by acknowledging and sharing these feelings can adolescents learn to overcome them.
 - Reflect I am learning to seek comfort from others even when I feel hesitant about sharing my fears and worries.
- Activities:
 - The purpose of this activity is to identify those who are courageous and think about how they can use them as examples to act with courage in the face of their fears.
 - Ask everyone to think about people in their lives who give them the best example of courage. They can also use a TV show/movie character, a song, or a book character. Have them describe that person to the group and give an example of when they showed courage, even when they were scared. If they can think of a specific scene where their character acts courageous, you can have them pull a video up and show it to the group. If it is a song about courage, you can have them play it for the group. After they have all shared their examples of courage, ask them to discuss situations where they want to be courageous in their own lives. This can simple act of courage, for example being honest about how they are feeling to a parent/stepparent. Discuss what they can do to take these steps to being courageous every day.